

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CANADIAN CLUB OF HAMILTON

23rd MARCH, 1923

BY

SIR EDMUND WALKER, C.V.O., LL.D., D.C.L.

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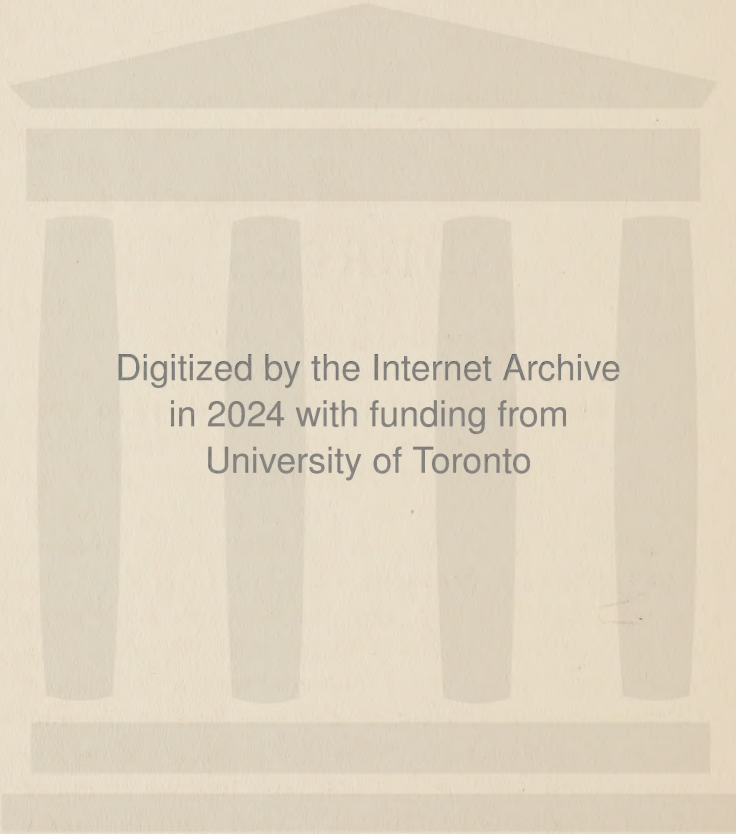
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Delivered before the Canadian Club of Hamilton
23rd March, 1923, by Sir Edmund Walker,
C.V.O., LL.D., D.C.L.

We are celebrating the birth, just thirty years ago in this city of the Canadian Club idea, and I am delighted that Col. McCullough, one of its parents, is still living to enjoy his reward, and is with us to-night. The diffusion of knowledge throughout Canada about the outside world and its affairs, and the spread of the gospel about Canada in many world cities where our clubs exist, has passed any dream that was possible thirty years ago. As a forum for messages to the public it now has countless imitators, but as an open forum with no propaganda except Canada itself it has no rival. If the politicians and the newspapers of the day rather follow than lead public opinion, there is still one place where leadership may give expression to any opinion so long as it is not treasonable. I am to speak about Canada and the Empire, but I must first say a little about the changes in thirty years. In some things there is no change, only a recurrence. In addressing the shareholders of our bank in the mid-summer of 1893 I said: "We are passing through a period of liquidation which naturally follows an era of such unprecedented activity." That sounds timely and familiar. I remarked that "steadiness in the annual return from our farming in Ontario is due to diversity in farming." That is still good advice to portions of the West. We were suffering from the McKinley tariff then as we are from the Fordney tariff

now. In chastened mood I said: "We have in the past made serious mistakes, and while these will probably not be repeated in the future, we may fall into error in new directions. Something, however, in our northern blood seems to keep us from getting altogether out of sound condition." We have surely made quite enough new mistakes and let us not hereafter rely too much on our northern blood. The trouble at that time in Italy and Australia, and in the United States where over 600 national, state, savings and private banks suspended, had begun, but we consoled ourselves by saying: "Meantime we should be thankful that matters move along quietly in Canada, and that apparently we can abide the issue whatever it may be."

The population of Canada has grown from 4,800,000 in 1891 to 8,800,000 in 1921. In Hamilton it has grown from 49,000 to 114,000. This is a very handsome growth measured in percentage, but we have still too small a population to sustain easily the overhead cost of administration and of our national debt. The foreign trade of Canada in 1893 was 247 millions, with an excess in imports of 10 millions. In the calendar year 1922, the total of our foreign trade was 1,660 millions, with an excess in exports of 136 millions. The capital of our banks has grown from 62 millions with reserves of 26 millions to 125 millions with reserves of 130 millions; the circulation of bank-notes from 34 millions to 152 millions, and the total assets of the banks from 304 millions to 2,527 millions. In 1893 we had clearing houses in 5 cities with total clearings of 981 millions, in 1922 we had 29 clearing houses with a total of 16 billions. There is, however, a seamy side to this splendid showing. Our national debt in 1893 was

241 millions. The war and certain capital expenditures have increased this to the enormous sum of \$2,400,000,000, to which must be added very large contingent liabilities for guarantees, mainly to railroads now taken over by the Government. Because of this debt and of those of our provinces and municipalities, and because of a vast change in our expectation of comfort and luxury, we have made Canada a dear instead of a cheap country to live in. We must not forget, also, that in creating our national wealth in its present form we have destroyed natural resources of incalculable value without any effort worthy of regard to replace them. I dislike figures, especially after dinner, and I promise that there will not be many more this evening.

Statistics relative to our material prosperity do not, after all, help us very much to come to a conclusion as to whether our country is improving as a dwelling place for man. I should rather say a few words as to our development in the higher aspects of life. I cannot illustrate our growth in 30 years in higher things better than by the figures of our expenditure in Ontario on Elementary and Secondary schools. In 1892 the expenditure was \$791,000 on capital and \$6,851,000 on maintenance, a total of \$7,642,000. In 1921 it was \$7,250,000 on capital and \$29,490,000 on maintenance, a total of \$36,740,000. Thirty years ago the government gave no aid to Universities but to-day its annual grants are nearly 3 millions. That this great increase, only a moderate part of which is borne by the Provincial Government, is caused by a desire on the part of the people for better quality in education is shown by the fact that the number of schools has grown only from 5,952 in 1891 to 7,245 in 1921-22,

and the attendance only from 513,000 to 639,000. In the same connection it is interesting to notice that while the attendance in elementary schools has increased only about 20 per cent., that in high schools and collegiate institutes has increased 75 per cent., and if to this we add the 15,000 scholars in 174 continuation and vocational schools, which did not exist in 1891, the attendance in the higher grades is two and a half times that of 1891.

The growth of our own University, while greater than others, is illustrative of all university development in Canada. Thirty years ago we had 1100 students, in 1921-2 we had 5300. Then we had two faculties, Arts and Medicine; now we have seven faculties, Arts, Medicine, Applied Science and Engineering, Education, Forestry, Household Science and Music, and also the Board of Graduate Studies, and two departments, Social Service and Public Health Nursing. Then our total annual budget for maintenance was \$118,000, and now it is \$1,800,000. The University has developed the medical course and helped to create hospital and other facilities, until it takes its place among the best in the world. The University should also have credit for creating a provincial museum which already ranks among the first four or five in America. The members of the faculty, numbering 82 in 1893, have grown to 650, and by their services to the community outside the university, have had an influence beyond calculation in improving the intellectual life of our people. Several public art galleries and many important private collections of paintings show our increasing appreciation of art, but not so significantly as the development of groups of young painters in some

centres of Canada, who are painting our country in moods, colours and atmosphere which cannot be mistaken for anything but Canada. And out of the same devotion to truth, as opposed to conventions, has arisen a sculptor entrusted with the high task of creating the monument on Vimy Ridge, by which our boys are to be remembered in the centuries during which this great monument will be one of the wonders of Europe. We have developed music sufficiently to have choral organizations famous abroad, and conservatories of music as large and with as high a standard as any in the English-speaking world. Art is taught in many schools of art and design, and we have in our province an art college supported by the State and affiliated with the University. I cannot hope to do more than briefly suggest what architecture, civic improvement and the general aspect of affairs plainly show,—that in thirty years we have made life on the intellectual and esthetic side more worth while, and have created standards of taste and criticism which have brought us nearer to the great centres of the world.

At every point of comparison we must remember that the period which separates us from the first meeting of the Canadian Club is that in which the railroads and steamships were developed so rapidly that the earth has become almost a social unit, in which to the wonder of telegraphy have been added the telephone, the wireless, and the radio; to the methods of locomotion, the automobile, and the various motor-driven sea and aircraft; and these, with moving pictures, are merely the most obvious inventions amidst wonders in other branches of science of greater real benefit to the human race.

Thirty years ago, only twenty-five years had elapsed since the experiment of the Canadian Confederation was launched, or since the rescript of the Emperor of Japan actually opened the world to Japan as well as Japan to the world. Competition with the Canadian Pacific was not even near its beginning, immigration into the north-west was still slow, and Canada frequently referred to herself as an outpost of the British Empire. It was not until fourteen years after that the offensive word "colony" was replaced by the phrase, "His Majesty's self-governing dominions beyond the seas."

During the lifetime of old Canada and that of the Dominion, until the Great War, although we had led in every reform in overseas relations since the loss of the thirteen colonies, we seemed always to be struggling for autonomy or one form of recognition or another, gaining step by step until some Canadians began to think that autonomy had gone far enough and that the real question was co-operation in Imperial defense and in some other matters. A Canadian Premier had said, at a great meeting in London, with Lord Strathcona in the chair, that in the event of Great Britain going to war we must consider whether it suited our policy to help, while, on the other hand, many Canadians felt keenly the shame of accepting the protection of the mother country entirely at her expense in both money and men. There were those who desired to federate the Empire into one parliament, but such were not often Britons born overseas; there were those who desired to share in Imperial defence and in the navy, and to share therefore in foreign affairs, levying the tax for such purposes themselves; and there were those who feared or disliked any lessening of our autonomy, and indeed, desired more.

It was a time of theories, action was not pressing. We were slipping into comfortable materialism, more confident of our own future than of that of the old land. Germany and the United States were making tremendous strides in commerce and in the technique of manufacturing, and Great Britain seemed to be falling in the rear. There were many croakers and Laurence Binyon answered them thus :

If England's heritage indeed
Be lost, be traded quite away
For fatted sloth and fevered greed ;
If, inly rotting, we decay ;
Suffer we then what doom we must,
But silent, as befits the dust
Of them whose chastisement was just.

But rather, England, rally thou
Whatever breathes of faith that still
Within thee keeps the undying vow
And dedicates the constant will.

* * * * *

By all who suffered and stood fast
That Freedom might the weak uphold,
And in men's ways of wreck and waste
Justice her awful flower unfold ;
By all who out of grief and wrong
In passion's art of noble song
Made Beauty to our speech belong ;

By those adventurous ones who went
Forth overseas, and, self-exiled,
Sought from far isle and continent
Another England in the wild,
For whom no drums beat, yet they fought
Alone, in courage of a thought
Which an unbounded future wrought ;

Yea, and yet more by those to-day
Who toil and serve for naught of gain,
That in thy purer glory they

May melt their ardour and their pain ;
By these and by the faith of these,
The faith that glorifies and frees,
Thy lands call on thee, and thy seas.

* * * * *

Lift up thy cause into the light !
Put all the factious lips to shame !
Our loves, our faiths, our hopes unite
And strike into a single flame !
Whatever from without betide,
O, purify the soul of pride
In us ; thy slumbers cast aside ;
And of thy sons be justified !

In that time when some feared that in the mad rush for money the virtues of our forbears had been lost, not only their morals, but their muscle, the call came to Great Britain. If she had been like one of the other great nations, she would have imitated it and have broken her promise to Belgium. If she had been like another great nation, she would have declared herself neutral. But there was no moment of doubt, and instantly she prepared for what she knew to be the greatest and most dangerous moment in her history. And to our everlasting credit be it said, we did not argue as the Canadian Premier said we should; we also had no moment of doubt and instantly prepared for what we did *not* know, did not even imagine among the possibilities.

I do not intend to touch the war itself. I only desire to ask you if there can be any doubt as to whether we desire to remain a part of the Empire which, now that the war is over, offers the only example, both in the history and conduct of the war and in meeting the consequences of it, of uprightness, sanity, and courage, to be found in this bewildering and unhappy time.

When the terrible war was calling daily for its sacrifices it was an English poet who wrote: *

There is not anything more wonderful
Than a great people moving towards the deep
Of an unguessed and unfeared future; nor
Is aught so dear of all held dear before
As the new passion stirring in their veins
When the destroying Dragon wakes from sleep.

Happy is England now, as never yet!
And though the sorrows of the slow days fret
Her faithfullest children, grief itself is proud.
Ev'n the warm beauty of this spring and
summer

That turns to bitterness turns then to
gladness,
Since for this England the beloved ones died.

Happy is England in the brave that die
For wrongs not hers and wrongs so
sternly hers;

Happy in those that give, give, and endure
The pain that never the new years may cure;
Happy in all her dark woods, green fields,
towns,
Her hills and rivers and her chafing sea.

Whate'er was dear before is dearer now.
There's not a bird singing upon his bough
But sings the sweeter in our English ears;
There's not a nobleness of heart, hand, brain
But shines the purer; happiest is England now
In those that fight, and watch with pride
and tears.

Can we regret that we fought by her side? Can we fail to see that the other nations of Europe who engaged in the war have slipped off the moral bases on which civilization rests and for the most part are not even struggling to get back? Is it not clear that individual and national honesty at each turn of events

looks to Great Britain for a sign? She is the cynosure of honesty; the grave, courageous adventurer into the unknown future, loaded with debt but not understanding anything but that what she has covenanted she must perform; still the mistress of the seas and of so much of the earth that she can never afford to be unwatchful; asking for the terrible bill from the other English-speaking nation in order that she may begin at once to make the money by her adventures on land and her argosies at sea with which to pay a debt, incurred not for herself but that the civilization of the world might be saved.

But while it is not necessary for most of us to argue as to whether we wish to remain a part of and to do our part in this great empire, we have citizens not British by descent who need arguments not mainly based on love, veneration, and blood relationship. By Confederation we have become trustees for the future of the third largest country in the world with 5,000 miles of coast on the Atlantic and 7,000 on the Pacific. We are not isolated like Australia and New Zealand, but must live and prosper alongside of the largest republic and the largest English-speaking nation in the world.

Why is it nevertheless, in our interest to link our fate with the British Empire?

The war and the improvements in transportation and communication have so connected the world that dreamers already talk of a world state. Rather than that, there may be a vast struggle for leadership, perhaps between nations of the white races and perhaps between white and other races. The smaller nations will have very little to say in such an emergency, and the peace of the world will depend upon the literal

strength and the moral greatness of one or more of the world powers. With our coasts upon the Pacific and the Atlantic we cannot play the role of isolation even if we desired to do so.

Apart from the racial question and the question of birth-rate which haunts it every moment, there is the question of government. No one can pretend that democracy is a success, and if a disordered world has to be restrained for its own good, who is fit to act as the policeman? The British people in their long history have developed something better than democracy and that is liberty,—“Where freedom slowly broadens down from precedent to precedent.” Step by step, looking back to safe harbourage as well as forward in hope, each advance has been made, remembering that no new thing is apt to be good, which has no past to which it is attached. The Briton distrusts written constitutions, codified laws, declarations of principles, schemes on paper of any kind. No one can tell him the law of his country precisely, because it is meant to meet new forms of wickedness as they arise. Consequently whether he is good or bad, he acts in response to a sense of conduct and not merely in response to a written law. This long struggle between conservative and liberal men for liberty has developed a sense of trusteeship in those who have power, and thus there are no citizens in the world to whom it is so safe to entrust power over the weaker brother or the weaker nation. This sense of trusteeship is accompanied by a willingness to serve the state in any and all emergencies at the price of comfort and even of life, which is rarely found in other nations. Sir Cecil Spring-Rice was the British ambassador at Washington during the terrible years of the war. On

the 12th of January, 1918, his last night in Washington, he wrote the following lines and one month later he died at Ottawa,—

I vow to thee, my country—all earthly
things above—
Entire and whole and perfect, the service
of my love,
The love that asks no questions: the love
that stands the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and
the best:
The love that never falters, the love that
pays the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final
sacrifice.

Canadian premiers sat in the Imperial War Cabinet equally with British ministers; Canadian prime ministers may communicate direct with the British prime minister; Canada signed the peace treaty and sits in the League of Nations on her own account; and Canada has now signed a treaty with the United States which at least leaves us in doubt as to what our full nationhood involves. But far more important than all this is it that we should consider the Empire, help to shape its future, shape ourselves in the light of its glorious past, see clearly the difference between its momentary political fluctuations, and those national virtues which have saved the British people in every time of doubt and trial.

Thus may we hope that when the world settles down to peace, we can take our place among the nations who represent the highest type of civilization; and should another day come when the English-speaking people are again to save that civilization, may we together with other Britons and alongside the soldiers of the United States, again quit ourselves like men.

